

This position is located in a Regional Office of the Animal Care (AC) program. The incumbent performs a wide variety of clerical and technical support duties for the assigned area of the Region, in connection with the Federal Animal Welfare (AW) and Horse Protection (HP) Programs operating throughout a multi-state area.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responds to a broad range of external inquiries (written and telephone) from the general public, the media, and licensees/registrants for the purpose of interpreting regulations and individualized application, receiving information about and documenting complaints against regulated facilities, and inquiries about the need for license/registration as required by the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). As necessary, refers complaints or unique situations to the appropriate Regional or Headquarters officials, as well as officials from other Federal, state, or local government agencies. Prepares written and/or email responses to complainants involving facilities in the assigned area.

Performs all support and processing functions for assigned areas associated with issuance of USDA Animal Welfare licenses and registrations for multiple facilities (eg. zoos and aquariums, wholesale pet and exotic animal trade, biomedical research community, air and land transportation industry). This includes telephone screening of potential applicants to determine the need for a license or registration, explaining the mechanics and requirements of the animal welfare program, mailing application packets, and ensuring all requirements have been satisfied before issuing a license or registration (thorough application review, calculation and collection of fees, pre-license inspection completed). Recommend improvements to the various procedural methods involved with the different types of licensing/registration activities.

Determines appropriate entity to be licensed for situations involving more than one potential licensee (eg. corporate buy-outs, partnerships splitting, contractors working with other businesses, co-owners with separate licenses, licensed sites on or near state borders). Recognizes situations where applicants may be trying to circumvent local laws and notifies appropriate personnel.

Performs all support functions for assigned areas associated with renewal of USDA animal welfare licenses and registrations. This includes querying the Animal Care computer database to determine which licenses/registrations are due for renewal, sending out the renewal packets, thoroughly reviewing returned forms for completeness, receiving and assuring proper payment of fees and transmission of fees to the MRP-BS Minneapolis office, and preparation of new certificates. Ensures that facility class changes are covered by a license during transition times.

Identifies those facilities that do not qualify for license renewal and processes their license cancellations. Determine if appeal requests warrant further review by higher level personnel. Cancels license/registrations on those persons who request cancellation. Discusses the potential legal ramifications for operating without a license or registration to these facilities. Discusses with research facilities the various repercussions of becoming "inactive" versus terminating their registrations.

Prepares individualized compliance documents for those persons who have violated the law. This includes Letters of Information (LOI), warning citations, requests for formal investigation, etc. Assures that all supporting documents are available, tracks and reviews individual compliance history, and ensures that the Investigative and Enforcement Services (IES) has accurate information to initiate the investigation and update their automated Compliance Investigation Tracking System (CITS), in addition to filling subsequent requests for additional pertinent documents/correspondence while case is ongoing.

Serves as one of the Freedom of Information (FOIA) contacts for the Region. Receives requests from AC Headquarters Coordinator and determines appropriate action. In accordance with the FOIA and Privacy Act, coordinates responses and expedites disclosure of releasable information. Clarifies information requested with the AC Coordinator and assures compliance with the law.

Maintains detailed computerized records (LARIS database and LaserFiche) and manual record systems to track inspection, pre-licenses, compliance, and complaint response activities as well as all associated correspondence related to facility. Generates recurring management reports on work accomplishments related to inspection activities conducted by field Veterinary Medical Officers (VMOs) and Animal Care Inspectors (ACIs). Recommends improvements to the LARIS system to increase efficiency in processing transactions and in retrieving information.

Provides support to field employees by responding to requests for information and supplies and preparing correspondence.

Generates routine and unique correspondence at request of Supervisory Animal Care Specialists, Assistant Regional Director, and Regional Director in response to correction deadline extensions, variances, exemptions, etc.

Coordinates all record keeping activities (complaint and search logs, suspense files, database maintenance, LaserFiche, facility files, FOIA requests, etc.)

Prepare, mail, and process written and electronically submitted annual reports of animal use from registered and Federal research facilities.

Performs general clerical duties including maintaining supply inventory, filling supply orders, filing, opening/sorting incoming mail, preparing outgoing mail, and purging official files in accordance with Records Management Handbook.

FACTOR 1 – KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

In-depth practical knowledge of the Animal Welfare and Horse Protection Programs and associated regulations and requirements sufficient to answer questions and process difficult transactions regarding licensing requirements, status of renewals, cancellations, appeals, inactive facilities, etc. Thorough knowledge of Animal Welfare Act (AWA) is essential to determine the type of license/registration needed for the regulated facility and if fees are required. Must also be able to distinguish between Federal and State laws in regard to licensing and recognize possible situations where applicants are trying to circumvent local laws.

Comprehensive knowledge of all licensing/registration procedures in order to process transactions involving complicated scenarios such as multiple licensees for same property. Incumbent is considered an authority on processing license/registration applications.

General knowledge of the field inspection procedures and techniques employed by AC to ensure compliance with the Animal Welfare and Horse Protection Acts.

Knowledge of program terminology to deal effectively with persons in regulated industries and discuss issues/concerns, e.g. biomedical research community, zoologic al parks and aquariums, air and land transportation industry, and wholesale pet and exotic animal trade.

Skill in oral/written communication to deal effectively with the media, the general public, field employees, other government agencies, and individuals from the regulated industry. Incumbent must explain complex AWA requirements and regulations to the public in a way that is clearly understood and be able to deal with irate individuals in a tactful manner.

Knowledge of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and Agency and Department correspondence formats for use in a wide variety of written correspondence (eg. compliance documents).

Knowledge of office procedures necessary to establish and maintain automated and hard copy office files, retrieve information, and assemble documents from the file. Must be skilled in microcomputer operations, especially word processing, data base management, and electronic document management systems. Duties encompass a wide scope of computer assisted functions/operations, from advanced word processing functions to automated information retrieval from a computer database or other electronic forums. A fully qualified typist is required.

FACTOR 2 – SUPERVISORY CONTROLS

The Regional Director establishes the overall objectives of the work based on the priorities and needs of the office. Assignments are given with general information on time frames, changes, etc. Much of the work will require on-the-spot determinations and interpretation of the regulations. The incumbent works independently on complicated licensing/registration requests from various written/oral procedures and guidelines. When current practices or deviations in an assignment cause problems, incumbent uses own initiative in developing a new approach to finding an acceptable solution. The employee identifies unique situations (eg. variances to regulations, formal enforcement issues) that occur within the scope of the work and refers on to higher level personnel. Completed work is reviewed for conformance with regulatory requirements.

FACTOR 3 – GUIDELINES

Guidelines include the Animal Welfare Act, the Horse Protection Act, APHIS Directives, Notices, AC Policy Manual, AC Inspection Guides, Federal Register notices, Bulletins and Memoranda; desk manuals, APHIS Records and Correspondence Handbooks and dictionaries. Incumbent must regularly interpret numerous guidelines and relate them to unique situations/inquiries received from outside callers. Selects and applies detailed instructions for each task when available, but adapts general guidelines when nothing has been written for that specific situation or when initial guidelines are conflicting or unusable. Judgment is required to search manuals for the best method to use and the incumbent is encouraged to develop more efficient ways of accomplishing the task at hand.

FACTOR 4 – COMPLEXITY

Incumbent performs a variety of procedural duties in support of the Animal Care program including difficult license/registration determinations for multiple facilities, interpreting/explaining AWA requirements/regulations and utilizing a complex computer system to process and retrieve licensing/registration information. Decisions regarding what needs to be done involve evaluating if various facilities are required to be licensed/registered along with appropriate licensees and fees in situations where the facts are conflicting, incomplete or unclear. Resolution involves the interpretation of Animal Welfare requirements and recognizing inappropriate licensing requests. Incumbent is frequently called upon to interact with the public, regulated industry representatives, officials from other government agencies (Federal, state, and local) and must be prepared to respond to a wide variety of questions on short notice regarding the Animal Welfare Act, Horse Protection Act, and related paperwork requirements. Employee must use experienced judgment when determining what course of action should be taken to resolve complicated procedural problems and deciding when to request assistance from the Regional or Headquarters Staff, or, from officials at other government agencies, in handling unique regulatory inquiries.

FACTOR 5 – SCOPE AND EFFECT

The purpose of the work is to provide accurate license/registration determinations for multiple facilities, manual and computerized record keeping, detailed paperwork processing, written correspondence, and demonstrating a high degree of concern for customer service in support of the Animal Care and Horse Protection programs for the Region. These services are essential for the operation of these programs and contribute to their effectiveness.

It is crucial that the incumbent's evaluation of license/registration applications be accurate and in accordance with requirements to ensure that AC field personnel can monitor regulated facilities conducting business and maintain the integrity of the AWA. Since the incumbent is the first point of contact for public inquiries, providing quality customer service is essential in setting the tone for the public's perception of the AC program. Because of the highly sensitive and visible nature of the program, the files these individuals maintain must be at an accuracy level to withstand scrutiny by a court of law. In addition, the incumbent must adhere precisely to guidelines involving the verbal or written release of information to the public, the media, and related organizations. The incumbent handles considerable sums of money (thousands of dollars on a weekly basis), requiring the need for accuracy and integrity.

FACTOR 6 – PERSONAL CONTACTS

Contacts are with office coworkers, regional field personnel, AC Headquarters Staff, other government agencies (Federal, state, and local), prospective licensees, currently regulated establishments, terminated establishments, humane organizations, the media, and the general public.

FACTOR 7 – PURPOSE OF CONTACTS

Contacts are primarily to obtain and provide information, explain and emphasize compliance with procedural requirements, resolve problems and to assist with the coordination of efforts to ensure the effective operation of the Animal Care and Horse Protection programs.

FACTOR 8 – PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The work is mostly sedentary in nature. There are no special physical requirements to perform the work.

FACTOR 9 – WORK ENVIRONMENT

The work is performed in an office setting.